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S/P:JHFerguson:nrs
July 6, 1951

COMMAND IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND MIDDLE EAST

I. At a State-JCS-UK meeting on this subject on June ~~27~~ 19, 1951, a discussion was held which resulted in a suggested solution along the following lines:

a. Admission of Greece and Turkey to NATO.

b. An Allied Middle East Command, which would be a NATO command, under a British Supreme Allied Commander, in which the U.S., the U.K., France and Turkey would participate, it being understood that the U.S. would not assign forces to such command. Turkey would come under this command, but Greece would come under Eisenhower's southern command.

c. The forces under such command would be such forces as the NATO members and their associates (i.e., the British Commonwealth) assigned to such command, with consideration being given to offering the Turks the subordinate post of the Allied ground commander.

d. The headquarters of the Supreme Allied Command Middle East would not be established in a Middle Eastern country, but in some such place as Cyprus.

e. In addition to the Allied Middle East Command, a Middle East Defense Board, under

British

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British chairmanship, would be established to obtain the voluntary cooperation of the Arab States and Israel in the defense of the Middle East, and would act in an advisory capacity to the Allied Commander, Middle East. The U.S., France and Turkey would participate in such Board. This suggested proposal had the tentative approval of the JCS.

II. The British representatives consulted London and tabled a proposal in the Standing Group similar to the one described above except in two respects:

a. The British questioned the desirability of making the Supreme Allied Command Middle East a NATO command, and

b. They also questioned the desirability of establishing the headquarters of such command in Cyprus rather than Egypt.

III. Some of the State Department representatives also had reservations about the suggested arrangements, and proposed the following changes:

a. That the NATO command be called the Supreme Eastern Allied Command, in order to avoid the implication that the command extended geographically over the entire Middle East. The Eastern Allied Command would be assigned only forces of NATO members (i.e., U.S., U.K., France and Turkey).

b. The Supreme Allied Eastern Commander be British, and the British continue their own Middle East Command, naming the same man to both posts.

c. The

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c. The Allied Eastern Command and the British Middle East Command headquarters should both be located in Cyprus, but the Middle East Defense Board should meet initially in Turkey and subsequently in other countries of the Middle East.

IV. NEA agrees that there should not be a NATO command extending over the whole of the Middle East, but they feel there should be an Allied Middle East Command in which we would participate. They therefore agree with the British revisions of the tentative JCS suggestion.

V. The State Department representatives who favor a NATO Supreme Allied Eastern Commander and a separate British Middle East Commander argue as follows:

a. The only way the Turks can be persuaded to accept a British command is by admitting the Turks to NATO and asking them to put their forces under a NATO command.

b. Since the Command would be a NATO command it cannot now embrace the Arab States and Israel which are not members of NATO.

c. During the cold war the Arab States and Israel are not likely to put their forces under any allied commander in any case, and, in the event of hostilities, the arrangements can be altered. In the meantime the Middle East Defense Board can plan for the defense of the Middle East and try to prepare for indigenous assistance in the defense of the Middle East should hostilities occur.

d. The

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d. The creation of an Allied Middle East Command now would appear to be an extension of our commitments and would raise domestic political problems.

VI. NEA argues as follows:

a. The problem is to plan for the defense of the Caucasus and the Middle East, and the command should therefore embrace this area.

b. Since some of Arab States or Israel may be willing to place their forces under an allied command prior to hostilities, there must be a non-NATO command in the area which can assume command of such forces; Americans participating in such command will be necessary if any progress along these lines is to be made.

c. The Middle East Defense Board cannot adequately perform these functions prior to hostilities.

d. The Turkish forces in the east and west can be treated separately; those in western Turkey can be directed, as in the case of Greek forces, by Eisenhower's southern command and those in eastern Turkey can be directed by the Allied Middle East Commander.

e. American participation now in a non-NATO allied command for the Middle East need not involve U.S. commitments beyond present supply programs and training missions, and therefore should not cause domestic political difficulties.

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G - Mr. Matthews

July 9, 1951

NE - Mr. G. Lewis Jones

Substitute pages for "Command in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East".

George McGhee has asked me to get into your hands before the meeting scheduled at 4:15 p.m. today, the attached substitute pages for John Ferguson's memorandum on the above subject. I believe you gave a copy of this to the Secretary.

The new pages set forth NEA's thinking more clearly than John Ferguson's original draft.

Attachment:

Subject pages.

NEA:NE:GLJones:crc

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d. The creation of an Allied Middle East Command now would appear to be an extension of our commitments and would raise domestic political problems.

VI. NEA argues as follows:

a. The problem is to plan for the defense of the Middle East, the real prizes of which are the Persian Gulf oilfields and the Cairo-Suez area, and which is particularly vulnerable from an invasion through the Caucasus. The command should, therefore, face this squarely and embrace at least Eastern Turkey, Iran, the Arab States and Israel. Since the defense of this area is not directly related to defense of the NATO area, and none of the countries except, we hope, Turkey, are members of NATO, it should not be a NATO command. The fact that NATO countries have or may have troops here does not change this fact any more than it does in the Far East. It will mislead and dishearten the people of the ME to imply that Western interest in their defense is confined to the protection of the southern flank of NATO.

b. Since Israel and some of the Arab States may be willing to place their forces under some degree of allied command prior to hostilities, and others in the event of hostilities, there must be a non-NATO command functioning and gradually expanding its orbit in the area. Such a command cannot be quickly and satisfactorily improvised in event of war. It has the important Cold War function of encouraging and justifying the pro-Western elements in each of the ME states to make common cause with the West. Americans participating in such command will be necessary to attract the required measure of support. The allied command would seek and generate during peace the active cooperation of all of the states in the area in building up their indigenous forces; it would recommend regarding arms requirements, coordinate activities of outside training missions, and prepare defense doctrines and coordinated plans for joint military action by ME states in event of war. These objectives can be

accomplished

accomplished in conjunction with cooperating states even though these states are not willing to place their forces under the command in time of peace. To start with a command structure less clear cut and purposeful from the point of view of ME states would either delay their response or make it so half-hearted as to be useless.

c. The Middle East Defense Board cannot perform the functions of a competent command and staff organization; the MEDB is a flexible and experimental organism designed to elicit the maximum indigenous support for the command by conveying a sense of area participation even though at the outset a sound basis for this will be lacking -- the Board will be primarily an advisory front organization.

d. Although it is not essential to this plan, NEA believes that the Turkish forces in the East and West of Turkey can best be treated separately from a command and tactical standpoint, just as U.S. forces in Europe and the Caribbean. Once the Turks decide how their forces shall be divided between these theaters the two theater commanders face quite separate tactical problems: the commander in the Dardanelles-Bosphorus area would be part of Eisenhower's southern flank; the other as a part of the defense of the "Mountain Line" blocking Russian entry into the Middle East through the Caucasus. This fact cannot be changed by changing the names of area commanders. Turkey's entry into NATO is a different problem from that of the command of Turkish forces once she is a member. Once in, she will assume full NATO responsibilities and receive all available assistance to which she is entitled. Her participation in NATO must, however, be rationalized by a command structure related to her own particular military situation. Those forces in western Turkey, which form a part of the general Balkan-Aegean complex, can be directed, as in the case of Greek forces, by Eisenhower's southern command. Those in Eastern Turkey can be directed by the Allied Middle East Commander through a Turkish deputy.

e. American

c. American participation now in a non-NATO allied command for the Middle East need not involve U.S. commitments beyond presently contemplated supply programs and training missions, and therefore should not cause domestic political difficulties. Such participation would generate more respect for the US-UK-French Tripartite Declaration of May 25, 1950 which is the most positive factor for peace in the Middle East.

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In light of the increasing decline of British prestige in the ME, the small number of troops which Britain now has in the area or is likely to be able to bring into the area in event of war, the uncertainty and the inevitable time delay in the buildup of Commonwealth forces, in first instance primary reliance for ground forces for the defense of the ME must be placed in the Turks. In the event the British prove themselves unable to fulfill their projected role, Turkey would be the logical country to take over primary responsibility for the defense of the ME. At present there is reason to doubt that Iran, the Arab States and Israel would welcome Turkey in this role.